

ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

3210.5 A

DATE
10/19/94

SUBJ: CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE. This order establishes the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) program for all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees and their family members. This program assists employees and their family members in dealing effectively with possible disruptive distress caused by these critical incidents.

2. DISTRIBUTION. This order is distributed to the division level in Washington, to the branch level in the regions and centers, with a standard distribution to all field offices, facilities and unions.

3. CANCELLATION. Order 3210.5, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program, dated February 18, 1994, is cancelled.

4. BACKGROUND.

a. Studies of incidents where loss of life and injuries have occurred indicate that employees may react with some form of distress. Although most employees resume normal activities with no apparent signs of deterioration, some employees may experience continued symptoms of distress that could have an adverse effect on social or work-related behavior, as well as personal well-being. Symptoms of prolonged distress may manifest themselves as absenteeism, performance and/or conduct deficiencies, behavioral changes, substance abuse (alcohol and other drugs), marital and/or personal problems and voluntary job termination. Rapid access to CISD following a natural or human caused critical incident minimizes the duration and severity of the distress associated with these incidents.

b. In addition to formal CISD procedures and the EAP, peer support teams can provide ongoing, informal, and effective follow-up support. Local jurisdictions may decide to utilize their peer support team for non-national critical incidents, such as the death of a co-worker, if the local jurisdiction decides a formal CISD program is unnecessary. In these cases, the jurisdictional EAP manager will coordinate CISD efforts with the peer support team. Team members will educate co-workers and provide an outlet for stress-related symptoms; but the team members do not replace professional counselors.

5. DEFINITIONS.

a. Critical Incidents. Accidents/incidents, such as an aviation disaster with loss of life, acts of terrorism, bomb threats, exposure to toxic materials, prolonged rescue or recovery operations, and natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes. When a critical incident occurs, employees including management officials, may experience distress. Additional demands may be placed upon employees by the accompanying investigative activities following the major critical incident, as well as excessive media coverage.

b. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. An educational process designed to minimize the impact of a critical incident on employees.

c. CISD Manager. National EAP manager, or his/her designee, responsible for coordinating all CISD efforts, including serving as liaison with other federal and private agencies for CISD/EAP activities.

d. CISD Professional. A licensed mental health practitioner trained in disaster psychology, crises intervention, stress management, human communication, intervention strategies, post-trauma stress disorders and in the use of the formal CISD model.

e. Formal CISD Coordinators. The agency's designated national and jurisdictional EAP managers, the union(s) designated bargaining unit member(s), and a CISD Professional.

f. Distress. Normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Distress can be manifested in the following categories:

(1) Physical - fatigue, nausea, headaches, shock, etc.

(2) Cognitive - confusion, poor problem solving, inattentiveness, etc.

(3) Emotional - anxiety, guilt, denial, panic, depression, irritability, etc.

(4) Behavioral - changes in activity, withdrawal, emotional outbursts, drug consumption, inability to rest, etc.

g. Employing jurisdiction. One of the nine regions, the two centers, or the Washington Headquarters.

h. Jurisdictional EAP Manager. An agency employee from the Human Resource Management Division, who manages the EAP in an employing jurisdiction.

i. National EAP Contractor. A professional non-government business which provides EAP services and special CISM services, as requested, to the Agency's employees and their family members.

j. National EAP Manager. An agency employee within the Employee Relations Division (ALR-200) who manages the EAP agencywide.

k. Peer Support Team. FAA local employees trained as peer support members. These employees work with their jurisdiction's EAP manager to educate co-workers about normal reactions to stressful incidents and are an informal resource for peers. These trained employees help alleviate stress-related symptoms through ongoing informal discussions. Peer support teams do not replace professional counselors or substitute for the formal CISM program.

6. SCOPE. The CISM program is intended to proactively manage the common disruptive physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors that an employee may experience after a critical incident. The CISM program is not intended to evaluate employees by gathering factual information about employees' job performances or to be a mechanism for psychological assessments. The formal CISM briefing, consisting of a lecture format followed by a question and answer period, will last approximately 45 minutes and will be mandatory for all affected employees. The CISM is available through the agency's EAP.

7. PROCEDURES.

a. Whenever a critical incident occurs, the Office of Labor and Employee Relations will decide when to implement the formal CISM program after consulting with the appropriate office(s), such as the Office of Air Traffic Program Management, the jurisdiction's Human Resource Management Division, and the unions(s) at the national level. When the assistance of the formal CISM program is requested, the national and local EAP managers will review the procedures with the facility manager.

b. When a determination is made to implement the formal CISM briefing, all affected employees will be notified that during the next 48-72 hours the EAP will conduct a two phase CISM intervention. Normally, a CISM Professional will arrive within 24 hours of the critical incident. Appropriate CISM educational brochures will be distributed. The first CISM phase consists of the CISM Professional conducting briefing which will last for approximately 45 minutes. Participants are limited to the CISM Professional, formal CISM Coordinators, and the employees affected with the critical incident. This mandatory meeting will be informational, consisting of a lecture format followed by a question and answer session. Employees will be reassured that the signs of distress that they experience, or many experience, are very normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

c. Previous experience has shown that mandatory attendance facilitates co-worker support and assists all members of the work unit in handling the crisis and resuming normal duties quickly with a minimum of disruptions. For the most successful and effective briefing, this first CISD phase is mandatory for personnel who were on duty during the incident, and/or were directly or indirectly involved with the incident, including rescue operations and subsequent activities.

d. This first phase of the CISD intervention is not confidential as employees have been mandated to attend. Therefore, counseling or group processing should not occur since it would not be protected under federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to confidentiality. The participants will be strongly encouraged to maintain confidentiality and asked that whatever is said not be shared with anyone who did not attend.

e. At the end of this first phase, the CISD Professional will notify the employees that a licensed counselor will be available for anyone who desires additional CISD services. Employees who elect to attend these additional sessions will be protected under the federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to confidentiality. However, if group counseling occurs, group members are not bound by the confidentiality regulations which exist within the doctor/patient relationship. Lack of legal confidentiality among group members exists in any group counseling session, whether in the public or private sectors. However, group participants are strongly encouraged to maintain confidentiality.

f. A series of these CISD briefings will be scheduled to ensure that all employees have an opportunity to attend. Special CISD sessions will be conducted for family members and friends in order to help them understand and support the employee during this traumatic period. Counseling is available through the EAP. Peer support members will also be available for ongoing, informal discussions.

8. TRAINING. The formal CISD facilitators will attend a minimum of a three-day agency provided CISD training course conducted by a contractor. CISD facilitators will have a thorough knowledge of the EAP field and preferably have an educational background in a health related discipline. Additional training will occur as specific agency needs are determined and as new developments occur within the CISD field. The agency will be responsible for training peer support members in each jurisdiction on CISD procedures and appropriate peer guidance procedures.

9. FUNDING. The Office of Labor and Employee Relations will provide CISD training, travel, and per diem for the national EAP manager. Each jurisdiction will pay the travel and per diem expenses for its respective EAP manager and bargaining unit member(s) to attend training session(s) and CISD debriefings.

10. EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. If needed, the national EAP manager will serve as liaison with other agencies such as the Department of Justice, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the National Organization of Victim Assistance.

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